

VZCZCXRO5990
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHRN
DE RUEHMR #0066 0441246
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 131246Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2609
INFO RUEHC/USAID WASHDC
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 2956

UNCLAS MASERU 000066

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR AF/S; PRETORIA FOR USAID/RHAP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KHIV](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [MCC](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: PEPFAR/ICAP HANDOVER CEREMONY AT QUEEN ELIZABETH II
HOSPITAL

Summary

11. Ambassador Perry and Minister of Health Phooko were the keynote speakers at a February 8, 2007 ceremony to hand-over renovated buildings at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru, Lesotho. The building renovations were funded by the US Government under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program. Columbia University's International Center for AIDS Programs (ICAP) headed the project as part of their assistance to the Government of Lesotho's (GOL) national program to prevent mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV. Columbia University and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) formed the Partnership for Family Centered HIV Services in 2005 to assist scale-up of PMTCT in Lesotho. The hand-over ceremony was well attended by high level officials including the CEO of the National AIDS Commission, senior officers in the Ministry of Health, and heads of other agencies working on HIV/AIDS. Since the inception of "The Partnership" program, the number of mothers treated has grown to over 125 and nearly 600 HIV exposed infants received Nevirapine prophylaxis.

Successful Handover of Renovated Hospital Buildings

12. The Minister of Health and Ambassador June Carter Perry highlighted the U.S. Government-supported program to prevent maternal-infant transmission of HIV at a ceremony to hand over renovated clinic buildings in the country's capital Maseru on February 8, 2007. The renovated buildings are part of Lesotho's main tertiary care center, the dilapidated Queen Elizabeth II Hospital. The renovations include the partitioning of the maternal and child health clinic, the construction of the HIV clinic waiting area, and the partitioning of the canteen to create a lecture or a meeting room for staff. Guests at the ceremony took a walking tour of the facilities and listened to key note speeches by the Minister of Health and the US Ambassador. The hand-over ceremony was well attended by high level officials including the CEO of the National AIDS Commission, senior officers in the Ministry of Health, and heads of other agencies working on HIV/AIDS

Government of Lesotho Committed to Improving People's Health

13. The Minister of Health and Social Welfare Dr. Phooko stated the objectives of the renovations are to improve patient flow, ensure privacy and to assist facilitate a patient-friendly environment. He said the renovated building of Queen II hospital is aimed at improving the quality of PMTCT for pregnant women in the hospital. He indicated that the hospital is left with a big challenge of universal access to health treatment, care and support to community members who work with HIV/AIDS patients.

The Minister also said he hoped the Millennium Challenge Account, if agreed, would provide support in the area of human capacity building and human resource development.

US Government Assistance to Prevent Mother to Child Transmission
of HIV

14. Ambassador June Carter Perry said women and their offspring are literally the lifeblood of the Basotho nation, saying the renovations and the commission of the buildings are a visible, tangible acknowledgement that the international partnership members, in collaboration with the GOL, will not allow the mothers and children of Lesotho to become sick and die without doing all they can to stop it. Ambassador Perry explained that the Lesotho Partnership for Family Centered HIV Programs is a U.S. government-funded initiative that has been supporting the implementation of family centered HIV/AIDS care and treatment programs for exactly one year. The Partnership is formed by Columbia University's International Centre for AIDS Care & Treatment Programs (ICAP), and the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) and is funded under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Concrete evidence of the Partnership's success is visible in the increase of mothers on treatment which rose from one in early 2006 to 46 in early 2007. In addition, 576 infants received Nevirapine prophylaxis under the Partnership's Initiative.

PERRY